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REMARKS

UPON THE

EIGHTH SECTION OF THE SECOND VOLUME

OF

MR. WARTON'S

Hiſtory of Engliſh Poetry.

The Author is certainly at liberty to fancy caſes, and make whatever compariſons he thinks proper; his ſuppoſitions ſtill continue as diſtant from fact, as his wild diſcourſes are from ſolid argument.

JUNIUS.

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REMARKS, &c.

IN the Annual Regiſter for 1778, Mr. Dodſley has reſumed the ſubject of Rowlie's Poems. The whole of this ſecond publication is taken, as he tells us, from Mr. Warton's Hiſtory of Engliſh Poetry; whoſe opinion, from his knowledge as an antiquarian, and judgment as a man of taſte, he looks upon as deciſive. Theſe extracts made me deſirous of reading the whole ſection from which they were taken. I accordingly read it very carefully; and I am ſorry to ſay, that the information I gained from it, was by no means anſwerable to what I had a right to expect from the reputed abilities and character of that author.

The method the Profeſſor there lays down to himſelf is, to give us,

1ſt. Some *account of the manner in which Rowlie's Poems were brought to light.* 2dly. Some *ſpecimens of them.* He then adds his own opinion, viz. That Rowlie was not the author, that Chatterton was.

That Rowlie was not the author, he endeavours to prove, 1ſt, By external arguments; 2dly, By internal. Some levelled againſt the collection of Poems in general; others againſt particular pieces.

The external arguments are as follow: That *the form of the letters eſſentially differs from every one of our ancient manuſcripts*; that *the characters were not uniform*; that *care had been evidently taken to tincture the ink with a yellow caſt*; that *the parchments themſelves had been ſtained with ocre, which was eaſily rubbed off.* The manuſcript too, *which he had examined carefully himſelf, had,* it ſeems *ſome heraldic delineations,* not ſuitable to the time, which confirm him ſtill more in his opinion.

The internal arguments are theſe: *An affectation of obſolete words and ſpelling; improper*

improper combinations of them, and improper contexture with the preſent modes of ſpeech. The inconſiſtency of the ſtyle in different pieces; the conſiſtency, ſpirit, and excellence of the collection in general.

The particular pieces whoſe authenticity he queſtions, are, the Song to Ælla, &c. J. Lydgate's Anſwer; Sir C. Baldwin; the Battle of Haſtings; the Accounte of W. Canynge's Feaſt; the Epiſtle prefixed to the Tragedy, and through that, the Tragedy itſelf.

Having now proved them, to his own ſatisfaction at leaſt, not to be Rowlie's, he at once determines them to be Chatterton's; whom he conceives to have been very capable of ſuch an impoſture, from his natural abilities and turn of diſpoſition; from his *ſituation and connections*; and from the little difficulty which ſuch a forgery as this would be attended with.

Theſe, I believe, are the chief grounds upon which our author argues, and as far as can be collected from a treatiſe which is not always ſo regular as it might have been, the amount of every thing he ſays.

Having thus given the reader this ſhort view of the Profeſſor's arguments, I ſhall now proceed to examine them particularly. As to the method obſerved by me, I ſhall ſay nothing, that being entirely the Profeſſor's own.

Firſt, therefore, of the narration, or *account he gives of the manner in which the Poems were brought to light*. How far this is diſtinct and clear, and agreeable to the general laws of narrative, it is not my preſent buſineſs to inquire. The accuracy of it, in regard to truth and fact, is all that comes under my notice; in which it certainly fails, at leaſt if credit is to be given to perſons who have examined the matter on the ſpot; with whoſe accounts the Profeſſor does not always ſeem to agree. Sometimes the difference between them is trifling; ſuch as calling the wooden cheſt an *iron* one, &c. and indeed would hardly be worth mentioning, were they not proofs that the Profeſſor had never been at Briſtol, though I believe he was once within ſixteen miles of it. The age of Chatterton is a very

material

material circumſtance; he is ſaid by the Profeſſor to have been *about ſeventeen* when the Poems were diſcovered; but as he was born at the latter end of 1752, and the Poems were diſcovered at lateſt in the autumn of 1768, he could not then have been quite ſixteen. The difference of this year will be of more importance than appears at firſt ſight, when we conſider that he was not known as an author till after fifteen, the time at which he left ſchool, where his neceſſary employment was ſuch, that he could hardly have much leiſure for other ſtudies.

As to the Profeſſor's *ſpecimens of theſe Poems*; whatever his judgment in ſelecting them may have been, accuracy in tranſcribing them ſeems to be what he has very little attended to. For inſtance, the deſcription of the morning, which is aſcribed by him to the minſtrels, is a part of Celmonde's ſpeech after the victory at Watchet. In the *Chorus or interlude of the damſel who drowns herſelf*, ſcarce one line agrees with the printed copy. The Song to Ælla he tranſcribes at length;

John Lydgate's Anſwer he determines to be *beneath tranſcription*; but that it may not paſs wholly unnoticed, he gives us a long note to prove it a forgery. This argument has certainly the appearance of being miſplaced; but it is to be preſumed, that the Profeſſor had his reaſons for it. This parchment which contained the Song to Ælla, J. Lydgate's Anſwer, and the introductory letter, was one of the very few that Chatterton ever produced as originals. The reaſons for which its authenticity is doubted by the Profeſſor, are theſe: That *Turgotus and Chaucer are both ſaid to have lived in Norman times*; which, as he rightly obſerves, might be true of Turgotus, who died in 1115, but could not be equally applied to Chaucer, who was nearly cotemporary with Lydgate. Perhaps in thoſe times, the particle "*and*" might not connect ſo ſtrongly as it does at preſent; and Turgot may be joined with Chaucer only as referring to his excellence, and not to the time in which he lived. But ſuppoſing this remark to be juſt, it will as well prove that Chatterton did not

write it, as that Lydgate did not; his antiquarian knowledge, according to the Profeſſor, being ſuch as muſt have informed him better. Beſides, Chaucer was his favourite author, whoſe gloſſary he continually conſulted. It is therefore very near as improbable that ſuch an anachroniſm ſhould come from him, as from Lydgate himſelf. The Profeſſor's next remark is, that Chaucer and Turgot *are oddly coupled in another reſpect*, as the latter *only wrote ſome Latin Chronicles*. Now Turgot wrote not in Latin, but, in his mother-tongue, according to Bale; nor were his works, by the ſame author's account, entirely hiſtorical. It is urged likewiſe by the Profeſſor, as another objection, *that Stowe is mentioned as living with Chaucer and Turgot. This Stowe*, he ſays, to ſhew his learning where reaſons only are wanted, *ſhould be Stone, who was Lydgate's cotemporary. That this Stowe ſhould be Stone* is very probable, as the letters *n* and *w* were ſo alike in this very parchment, that Chatterton read the author's name Ronlie, till he was ſet

right

right by Mr. Barret. As to the other assertion of the Professor's, that Stowe *is mentioned as living with Chaucer and Turgot*, the words upon which he founds it, are,

In Norman times Turgotus, and
Great Chaucer did excell,
Then Stowe, the Briſtol Carmelyte, &c.

Whether this does not mean directly the contrary to what the Professor ſays it does, I ſhall leave to the reader to determine. The Professor's laſt argument againſt this piece, is *the extreme and affected meanneſs of the compoſition.* The word *affected* is moſt probably here foiſted in, to avoid the abſurdity of ſuppoſing this Poem, and the Song to Ælla, the ſerious productions of the ſame perſon. Whether the meanneſs of any compoſition can be admitted of as a concluſive proof that it is forged, may juſtly be doubted; but the Professor would have done well to have conſidered the conſequences fully, before he riſqued ſo dangerous a doctrine. But to return to the extracts;

where

where, among others, he cites a paſſage from *a dialogue between two ladies* (viz. a ſoliloquy of one gentleman). This circumſtance is of little or no weight on either ſide; and I have only mentioned it to exemplify what he himſelf confeſſes, that his quotations are not always ſo accurate as they might have been.

Having thus prepared his readers for his opinion, he accordingly gives it, and very deciſively, viz. *That none of theſe pieces are genuine.* This he reſts upon the following circumſtances; which are, I preſume, his external arguments. Among theſe, the firſt is, that Sir Charles Bawdin *is allowed to be modern, even by thoſe who maintain all the others to be ancient.* In all the enquiries I have been able to make, I never yet found any body who allowed this. Who they were who did allow it, and of what authority, I could wiſh the Profeſſor had told us; at preſent, his proof cannot be of any great weight with thoſe who are not already pre-determined to grant that the Poem is modern. His note upon the paſſage cer-

tainly does not carry much conviction. What is there contained (although, doubtleſs, very curious) being in general but little to the purpoſe; what there is to the purpoſe, rather in favour of the Poem than the contrary.

The Profeſſor's next objections are drawn from the parchment which contained the Song to Ælla and J. Lydgate's Anſwer, viz. That *the writing was a groſs and palpable forgery, not even ſkilfully counterfeited*; that *the letters, though artfully contrived to wear an antiquated appearance, differed from all our ancient alphabets*; that *they were not uniform*; that *the parchment had been ſtained with ocre, which was eaſily rubbed off*; and that *care had been evidently taken to tincture the ink with a yellow caſt*. Part of this would, if clearly proved, have great weight with many. However, this does not reſt, it ſeems, upon the Profeſſor's authority, but upon his friend's. Perhaps it is not quite fair in him to bring ſuch very poſitive aſſertions about manuſcripts, which cannot now be referred to, as they are, to

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uſe his own expreſſion, *unfortunately loſt*. The manner of their loſs was too, as I have heard, extraordinary. This the Profeſſor ſays nothing of; whether his friend had been tender of giving him any information on ſo delicate a ſubject, or whether he thought it might injure his cauſe, and has therefore ſlurred it over, it matters not; we muſt lament, and not enquire. As to their being *ſtained with ocre*; I have heard from the beſt authority, that one of the manuſcripts was not ſtained with ocre, at leaſt when it left Briſtol; the yellow roll, as the name implies, was originally ſtained for diſtinction ſake: nor, if there had been any ſuch ſtain upon the firſt, would it have proved it modern. As *from ſome notices I have received* (to uſe the Profeſſor's own claſſical expreſſion) *I find*, that moſt of the parchments in many archives throughout the kingdom, have a ſort of yellow duſt upon them; which the converting fancy of an *ingenious critic* might, eſpecially if inclined before to do ſo, eaſily miſinterpret into ocre. As to the ink; I do not

mean

mean to undervalue the abilities of the Profeſſor's friend; it muſt, however, require a greater degree of ſagacity than I can well conceive, to determine exactly whether the *yellow caſt* of the ink was the effect of time, or accident, or art. But after all, to what purpoſe all this? it is ſurely unneceſſary; for if the Profeſſor's word may be taken, he *has already proved Lydgate's anſwer, which was on the ſame parchment, and apparently in the ſame hand, a manifeſt impoſition.* What I have above hinted in regard to this ſame note, will, I hope, make the reader a little ſcrupulous how he receives any thing from the Profeſſor as an unqueſtionable truth, till he ſhall have examined it himſelf pretty carefully, at leaſt put him ſo far upon his guard as not to take any thing at the Profeſſor's hands intirely upon truſt.

But the Profeſſor, not willing to leave the glory of ſo great a diſcovery entirely to his friend, and to put things out of all doubt, acquaints us, that his own examination of the parchment containing the account of W. Canynge's Feaſt, confirms, very

very fully, all that he has told us of the two other parchments on the authority of his friend. This parchment, he ſays, with an appearance of ſorrow, *betrayed all the ſuſpicious circumſtances obſerved in the Ode to Ælla.* One would imagine, that here at leaſt he muſt have been uncommonly accurate, having, by all accounts, had the manuſcript in his poſſeſſion long enough of all conſcience to have made himſelf thoroughly maſter of it. But I never heard any one, except himſelf, ſay that *it was ſtained with ocre, or that care had been evidently taken to tincture the ink with a yellow caſt.* As to the difference of the hand-writing from that of the age, that, even ſuppoſing it to be true, will not, I apprehend, be looked upon by every one as a deciſive proof, till the neceſſity that all cotemporary writers ſhould write the ſame hand, is made to appear. *Even the ſtyle and drawing of the armorial bearings,* are ſaid by the Profeſſor, *to diſcover the hand of a modern herald.* As to theſe, from all I have been able to learn, they are not reducible to any ſort of heraldry

raldry that ever was. But that I may not ſeem to take a malicious pleaſure in diſputing every thing he aſſerts, and accepting and availing myſelf of thoſe conceſſions which he ſo generouſly makes, without making him any in return, I will, if he pleaſes, give him up this piece. Perhaps it may be a forgery; there are more reaſons for thinking ſo of this than of any other, but the Profeſſor ſeems not to have hit upon them. The remark with which he concludes theſe external arguments, is rather unfortunate. He *believes*, it ſeems, that this Accounte of W. Canynge's Feaſt, *is the only pretended original of Rowlie's poetry now remaining.* To talk in ſo very heedleſs a manner, is hardly uſing his readers fairly. The leaſt attention to the point in hand, even once reading over the Poem, might have ſhewn him, that Canynge, and not Rowlie, was the reputed author of it.

Having thus finiſhed his external evidence, he proceeds, ſecondly, to the internal. His firſt proof here is, *the unnatural affectation of ancient ſpelling and obſolete*

ſolete words, not belonging to the period aſſigned theſe Poems; which, according to him, *muſt ſtrike us at firſt ſight.* What he means by *not belonging to the period aſſigned theſe Poems,* does not, I own, immediately ſtrike me. Does he mean that they belong to any period before Rowlie's time? or any ſubſequent one? or does he intend to hint by theſe words, what Mr. Tyrwhitt has told us, that many of them are not to be found anywhere? Whichever is his meaning, he has expreſt it rather obſcurely; but at all events he might certainly have avoided this, with little trouble to himſelf, and much ſatisfaction to his readers, by citing ſome inſtances. His next mark of forgery is, that *combinations of theſe old words are formed, which never yet exiſted in the unpoliſhed ſtate of the Engliſh language.* That *the antiquated diction is often inartificially miſapplied by an improper contexture of the preſent modes of ſpeech.* Here again, as I have obſerved juſt now, it were to be wiſhed, that the Profeſſor had given us ſome inſtances. It would have ſaved me,

and poſſibly ſome others, much trouble. For my own part, I have ſearched, and with ſome diligence, for theſe *contextures and combinations*, but hitherto with little ſucceſs. But, what is of more importance, *the poet ſometimes forgets his aſſumed character, and does not always act his part with conſiſtency, for the Interlude of the damſel who drowns herſelf, is much more intelligible, and free from uncouth expreſſions, than the general phraſeology of theſe compoſitions.* This may be eaſily accounted for by the genius of elegiac poetry, which is naturally ſimple and unaffected. There is, however, another way of accounting for this differenee, more deciſive, though leſs obvious; which is, that the Profeſſor ſeems to have modernized it in no leſs than forty-eight places; which one would imagine was not ſo very eaſy a taſk, as the whole Poem conſiſts only of nine ſtanzas. Many of his other quotations are inaccurate, as he himſelf rightly obſerves, but none ſo much as this. In other parts, his alterations ſeem to give the words a more antiquated caſt. In the

Poem

Poem before us, this would have defeated the end he had in view, the modern appearance of the Poem being what he founds his objection upon.

Having now gone through (as I imagined at leaſt, for I found myſelf miſtaken, as the reader will ſee very ſhortly) his general proofs, he comes to particular pieces, v. g. *In the battle of Haſtings, Stonehenge is called a Druidical temple. But about Turgot's time*, according to the Profeſſor, *no other report prevailed about this miraculous monument, than that it was erected in memory of Hengiſt's maſſacre. This*, he ſays, *was the eſtabliſhed and uniform opinion of the Welch and Armorican bards, who had it from the Saxon minſtrels. That the Druids conſtructed this ſtupendous pile for a place of worſhip, was a diſcovery reſerved for the ſagacity of a wiſer age, and the laborious diſcuſſion of modern antiquaries.* Let us examine a little upon what foundation this great traditional authority is built. We have it from the Profeſſor, whom we certainly have not too much reaſon to give implicit credit to—who

had it from Geoffry of Monmouth, whoſe romance is nothing more than a collection of mere fables—who had it from the Armorican bards, none of whoſe works are now extant, if ever there were any—who had it from the Saxon minſtrels, who, I believe, were never extant at all. So that this tradition has its original nowhere—is tranſmitted by people whoſe teſtimony does not exiſt—confirmed by one of the moſt notorious liars that ever lived, and the laſt ſtamp put to its authenticity by the Profeſſor. What infidels muſt we be, who do not ſubmit to ſuch irrefragable evidence! But ſuppoſing this was the common report, which by no means appears, is it impoſſible that a man of learning ſhould have known the truth, though contrary to common report. He muſt, at leaſt, have had better materials ſo much nearer the times, than our *modern antiquaries*, who are ſuppoſed to be the firſt authors of this diſcovery, and perhaps as much *ſagacity* to have made uſe of them. His next proof is from the Epiſtle to Lydgate (meaning, I

ſuppoſe,

ſuppoſe, the Epiſtle to Canynge) in which, he ſays, *ſome great ſtory of human manners* is recommended as the ſubject *moſt ſuitable for theatrical repreſentation. This idea*, he ſays, *is the reſult of that taſte and diſcrimination, which could only belong to a more advanced period of ſociety.* Supposing this quotation was in Rowlie's words, which it is not, what direct proof againſt the tragedy's being ancient can be built upon it? Is it improbable, that a man of taſte ſhould be diſguſted at the abſurdity of the dramatical repreſentations, which uſually prevailed in the age when this was ſuppoſed to be written? That his genius, taſte, or learning, ſhould point out to him the proper object of dramatic poetry?—The efforts of genius have not always kept exact pace with the ſtate of ſociety; as at ſome times they have followed it but ſlowly, ſo at others they have advanced beyond it. This argument is ſeconded by a long note, which, however, contains nothing more than ſome cavils upon two or three words; viz. that by *minſter* muſt be meant *the*

preſent cathedral at Briſtol; that *Briſtol is called a city*, which it was not till 150 years after Rowlie and that *Accounte in his time had not loſt its original ſenſe and ſpelling*. But in fact, St. Ewin's church at Briſtol was anciently called the minſter, and not the preſent cathedral. However, let us grant that it was the preſent cathedral. The preſent cathedral was, at that time, an Auguſtine monaſtery, according to the Profeſſor *, and minſter is, by the ſame authority †, ſaid, *in its ſimple acceptation to ſignify monaſtery*. So, that if it was called minſter, it was called by its right name. The ſecond word is in the proſe writings, where much is very probably interpolated, and about which I never could get any information I could depend upon. The Account of W. Canynge's Feaſt, as I have before hinted, and ſhall ſhew by and by, is much to be ſuſpected; to be ſuſpected in many particulars, and moſt in the title.

* In this very note.

† In the additions and emendations upon this note.

But,

But, to follow the Profeſſor back to his general arguments, and, to uſe his own very expreſſive words, *Above all, the caſt of the thought, the complexion of the ſentiment, and the ſtructure of the compoſition, evidently prove theſe pieces not ancient. The Ode to Ælla*, he ſays, *has exactly the air of modern poetry, ſuch as is written at this day, only diſguiſed with antique ſpelling, and phraſeology.* But if this be really the Profeſſor's opinion, he muſt have been peculiarly fortunate, as very few things which have been publiſhed lately, or perhaps at any time, can ſtand in competition with them. But ſuppoſing the Poems are ſuperior to modern ones, even that can hardly prove them forgeries. Many writers of undoubted authority, differ much in ſtyle from their cotemporaries. Terence and Plautus, who wrote in the ſame way, as well as in the ſame age, are as different in point of ſtyle, as any two writers who lived in different ages could have been. A ſimilar inſtance occurs among our own authors. Biſhop Hall's Virgidemiæ were, I believe, publiſhed before Dr.

Donne's Satires. The difference between them, when conſidered as cotemporary writers, is aſtoniſhing; as great, certainly, as between Rowlie and Lydgate, or any other, that lived either at or near thoſe times. No poſitive concluſion can, therefore, be drawn from this kind of objections.

Theſe, I believe, are all the internal arguments which the Profeſſor has vouchſafed to give us; and of theſe, few ſeem to make good the point they are deſigned for, much fewer to be of the leaſt importance. Objections of weight ſeem to have been left purpoſely unſupported, either by argument, or inſtance. However *high* the Profeſſor's *authority* may be, to have his bare aſſertions taken for proof, is a *greater deference* than he can reaſonably expect.

Having thus proved, to his own ſatisfaction, that Rowlie is not the author of theſe Poems, he at once aſcribes them to Chatterton; whom he repreſents as *a prodigy of genius*, of ſuch talents for poetry, that *he would have proved the firſt of Engliſh*

liſh poets, had he reached a maturer age. Whoever will read the Poems publiſhed in his name, may, perhaps, doubt this very extraordinary account of his abilities. There cannot, in my opinion, be any two collections of Poems more eſſentially different than Chatterton's and Rowlie's. The former have every imperfection one might expect from the author's age; and excel in thoſe points only, which are more within the reach of a boy. His verſes generally flow off in exact cadence and harmony; ſometimes the thoughts are better expreſt than any one reaſonably could have expected. But if any one looks for the propriety, conſiſtency, conduct, and ſpirit of Rowlie, he will be much diſappointed. Where does Chatterton obſerve any one of the rules of good writing? Where does Rowlie fail in one? In ſhort, whatever has been ſaid by the Profeſſor upon the inequality and impropriety of the *old Engliſh bards*, may be applied with much more juſtice to Chatterton. What *his early compoſitions, written without any de-*

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ſign to deceive, were, which *the firſt critic of the preſent age* ſpeaks ſo highly of, I do not know, any more than who *this firſt critic* is. Nor is it, in my opinion, quite fair of the Profeſſor to give ſo very extraordinary a character of theſe Poems, without ſpecifying which of them they are, or giving us ſome *ſpecimens of them*, any more than to overbear us with ſuch irreſiſtible authority; without letting us know who this firſt-rate critic is; this image which he has ſet up for us all to bow down to. If, however, thoſe Poems the Profeſſor means, are in the above-mentioned collection, I cannot pay ſo much *deference* to this anonymous critic, or even to the Profeſſor himſelf, as to *pronounce* them ſo very *wonderful*. There are certainly marks of genius in them, far beyond his education; but I cannot ſay that I have yet met with any thing which promiſes to make him *the firſt of Engliſh poets*. That *by his ſituation and connections he was a ſkilful practitioner in various kinds of hand-writing*, will be found, perhaps, on inquiry, a mere ſup-

poſition

poſition of the Profeſſor's. By better authority than the Profeſſor's, viz. the authority of thoſe who taught him, his common hand was a bad one, and he wrote very ſlow, or, in the Profeſſor's words, had but little *facility in the graphic art*. The attorney to whom he was articled, never employed him, except in writing precedents. From theſe circumſtances it cannot but be evident, that the Profeſſor had not ſufficient grounds for this aſſertion. In regard *to a ſufficient quantity of obſolete words and phraſes*, thoſe, according to the Profeſſor, *were readily attainable from the Gloſſary to Chaucer, and Percy's Ballads*. As for Percy, perhaps, it is barely worth remarking, that very few of the words uſed by Rowlie (I queſtion if ten) are to be met with in that gloſſary. As to Chaucer, the edition Chatterton had, was, if I remember, the very firſt that had a gloſſary to it, which is ſhorter almoſt by half than any other, and does not contain a fifth part ſo much as the gloſſary to the laſt edition. Now ſurely this muſt have been

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a very poor help for any one, much leſs a ſufficient means to have enabled one of his age, his education, and, in many other reſpects, circumſtanced as he was, to write ſuch poems, and to ſuch a number, as theſe called Rowlie's.

The Profeſſor, pleaſed with the ſucceſs of this laſt argument, makes us, with all the ſecurity of a conqueror, a kind of inſulting conceſſion; and allows, that *ſome poems written by Rowlie might have been preſerved in Canynge's cheſt*; but ſays, that *if there were any, they were ſo enlarged and improved by Chatterton, as to become entirely new compoſitions.* What alterations can have ſo ſurpriſing an effect as to make a tranſcript an original, is, I own, above my comprehenſion. That Chatterton did corrupt many words, and modernize others, is very certain; and the groſs miſtakes in many of his explications, have ſince been diſcovered. Which miſtakes are ſuch as he could never poſſibly have committed, had he been the author, and followed his gloſſary. The Profeſſor being tired of conceſſion, returns again to

his old way, of taking it for granted that he has proved things before he has made any advances towards it. The account of W. Canynge's Feaſt, *bids*, he tells us, *the faireſt for an original; this he has already proved a forgery.* In anſwer to this, I hope I may, without the imputation of acting too much like the Profeſſor, beg leave to ſuſpend my aſſent in regard to both theſe aſſertions. This poem would be ſafe enough, if the Profeſſor's objections were all that could be brought againſt its authenticity; but there are other circumſtances which may give us room to ſuſpect its not being genuine. It is very ſhort, there is little poetical merit in it, very little beyond Chatterton's abilities; and Mr. Walpole had ſuggeſted to him the idea of forgery, and ſhewn him that he might paſs for the author, by doubting the authenticity of the other manuſcripts. But what with me is above all, it has not been *unfortunately loſt*, as two, which were thought by ſome of the beſt judges, unqueſtionable originals, have been. But *that this circum-*

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ſtance is alone ſufficient to make us ſuſpect, that no originals ever exiſted, is more than can be granted. The proofs that even this manuſcript is a forgery, are by no means inconteſtable; nor if they were, would it follow of courſe, that all or any of the other manuſcripts muſt neceſſarily be ſo too.

As to the motives which the Profeſſor aſſigns for ſuch an impoſture; theſe are as extraordinary as his proof of it, viz. firſt, *Lucrative views.* This I ſhould apprehend could hardly have been the caſe; as, if I remember right, he communicated the two firſt manuſcripts without receiving any thing for them; and the ſums which he received for the others, were by all accounts ſo ſmall, that he probably got more by the meaneſt of thoſe he ſent to the magazines. As to *the pleaſure of deceiving the world,* which is the next motive our Profeſſor aſſigns; that is what I have no idea of. I do not mean from thence to argue, that it is by any means impoſſible; upon farther conſideration, it ſeems not wholly improbable, and per-

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haps may be thought to have had its influence with writers of greater repute than Chatterton. That he ſhould have *preferred the private ſucceſs of his impoſture, to the vanity of appearing as an applauded original author*, is utterly inconſiſtent with his general character. It being well known, that he never publiſhed any thing which he did not ſend an account of to all his friends; and he never owned to any of them, that what he had produced under the name of Rowlie, was an impoſture.

The Profeſſor's thoughts ſeem ſo intirely poſſeſſed with his hero, Chatterton, that I own I am ſomewhat ſurpriſed to find him returning ſo ſuddenly to Rowlie; and obſerving, that *in the notices which ſome of the chief patrons of Rowlie's Poetry ſent him from Briſtol, it was affirmed*, that the order for the viſitation of the cheſt *

* This was the cheſt from which Chatterton conſtantly ſaid he had taken the poems. It was depoſited by Canynge's order in a muniment room in Redcliffe church, and was to be ſolemnly viſited every year.

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we have before had occaſion to ſpeak of, was in *Canynge's will*; where, as he rightly obſerves, there is no ſuch order to be found. I am afraid there muſt have been ſome miſtake about theſe notices. Every body who has been at Briſtol muſt know, and the Profeſſor, if he had given himſelf the trouble to have gone thither, might have known, that it was a deed which contained this order; and that he might as well have looked into his friend Geoffrey of Monmouth, or Slawkenbergius upon Noſes, for it, as into Canynge's will. Upon this, with much ſhew of accuracy and learning, he tranſcribes a great part of the contents of this ſame will into a note; for what reaſon, but to prove that he had read it, I cannot conceive. And here, becauſe Canynge was dean of Weſtbury college, he gives us a ſhort hiſtory of the repairs of that college; he might as well, becauſe Canynge was a merchant, have taken occaſion to digreſs into a ſhort diſſertation upon trade. For, in fact, all this learning, and all this long quotation, would have

have been juſt as much to the purpoſe, and proved as much in one caſe as it does in the other. Had our Profeſſor beſtowed but half as much care and accuracy upon the main points in diſpute, he might, perhaps, have gone ſome way towards ſettling this whole affair.

As to the memoirs of Rowlie, I have little to ſay; much, poſſibly, may be true, and much interpolated; for which reaſon, and becauſe, as I have ſaid before, I never could get any account of this fragment at all ſatisfactory, v. g. by whom it was firſt publiſhed, through whoſe hands it firſt paſſed, what authority it ultimately reſts upon, I ſhall not attempt to give any opinion at all upon the matter. However, the Profeſſor's * objections, being entirely againſt words, do not ſeem to affect its authenticity in any article at all material.

I have now gone through the Profeſſor's ſection; and I muſt ſay, it has

* The words which he objects to, are *drawings*, in its preſent uncombined ſenſe. *Manuſcripts*; *Abbot of Coventrie*, inſtead of *Prior*, *Repayring leaſe*.

been a very diſagreeable taſk, to which the want of method did not a little contribute; and what is worſe, it ſeems to be of very little concern with him, whether he is right or wrong, whether he informs or miſleads his reader. Certainly, however, he does not fulfill the promiſe he made at the beginning of his ſection, viz. *of laying before his reader every internal and external argument, to enable him to determine upon the merits of this controverſy.* Indeed, he tacitly confeſſes as much himſelf, by annexing to it, as he has done, ſome *additions and emendations.* From theſe I had, I own, ſome hopes of being more fully ſatisfied; thinking, that by this means he had a fair opportunity of retracting ſome of thoſe raſh aſſertions which he deals in ſo very largely; and correcting, at leaſt ſome of the inaccuracies we ſo frequently meet with throughout the ſection. But, I am ſorry to ſay, that I was miſerably diſappointed; the only *addition* I could perceive, being that he has added falſe fact to falſe argument; the only *emendation*, that he has

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corrected himſelf when he happened, by ſome miſtake or other, rather unuſual with him, to be in the right.

The ſame method I preſcribed to myſelf in examining the foregoing part of the Profeſſor's work, I ſhall follow in this alſo, and give the reader a ſummary account of its contents, before I examine it particularly. Theſe (as far as the nature of the thing will admit of its being reduced to any ſettled form) ſeem, to the beſt of my apprehenſion, to be as follow: Some additional cavils upon words; ſome apology for inaccuracies; and ſome *new proofs*, for ſo he chuſes to call them, againſt the authenticity of the Poems in general, and one of them in particular, the Battle of Haſtings. His arguments againſt the Poems in general, are, from their being ſo excellent in themſelves, and ſo very unlike thoſe of cotemporary writers: againſt the Battle of Haſtings in particular, from the time at which Turgot (the ſuppoſed original author) died, and from the want of ſome diſtinguiſhing circumſtances in the Poem itſelf. After

this the Profeſſor enlarges afreſh upon the peculiar merit of Chatterton, and the motives which might have tempted him to ſuch a forgery.

I am ſorry to be forced to obſerve, that the Profeſſor ſeems to ſet off rather ominouſly, by correcting himſelf in one of the few truths and beſt grounded aſſertions to be met with in his whole ſection; viz. that *Turgot died in* 1115 (forty-nine years after the battle of Haſtings) not in 1015 (fifty-one years before it) as he now affirms in this correction, with an intention to build an argument upon it *. In the following note he informs us, that *he has received notices from St. Ewin's church at Briſtol, anciently called the minſter; which import, that the pavement was waſhed againſt the coming of King Edward; which does not at all prove or imply, that the King ſat at the great min-*

* This correction, being no more than one line, may eſcape many readers; it is printed with a reference to the page, but none to the ſubject, thus: Pag. 148, Not. Col. 2. l. 4, for "1115" read "1015."

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ſter window to ſee the gallant Lancaſtrian paſs to the ſcaffold. That I may not ſeem to differ from him for cavilling ſake, I here intirely agree with him: I believe the waſhing of the pavement was never urged as a proof that the King ſat at the window, but only as a corroborating circumſtance of Edward's being at Briſtol about that time. The circumſtance of his ſitting at the window, the Profeſſor objects to as improbable; why, I do not ſee, as the general character of Edward rather encourages ſuch a ſuppoſition, than contradicts it. His next objection is, that St. Ewin's church was formerly called the minſter; but that he *ſuſpects*, that what the poet intended here by the word minſter, muſt have been the preſent cathedral; and that he *does not think* that *the* minſter of our Lady *was a common appellation for Worceſter cathedral at that time.* Till the Profeſſor thinks fit to produce ſome ground for his ſuſpicion and belief, they cannot be conſidered as arguments of any great weight; and if he really had made out both, I do not ſee what advan-

tage it would have been to him in regard to the point in hand.

In his next note, he confeſſes very frankly, that he may have been guilty of ſome inaccuracies in his ſection; and makes the reader an apology for them. Here again I think the Profeſſor perfectly in the right; and as he has confeſſed thus much in general, I do not think it would be amiſs, if he was to ſpecify and retract all his errors, as well in the *additions* and *emendations*, as in the ſection itſelf. It would not be much longer than his ſection, which does not ſeem to have coſt him overmuch trouble. But to return to his apology. He had not, it ſeems, when he wrote this eighth ſection, *ſeen all the Poems*; what he had ſeen were only *extracts*, and thoſe extracts *not always exact*. From theſe conceſſions of his own, have we not ſome right to aſk the Profeſſor the following queſtions? Why he choſe to decide upon a ſubject which he had not thoroughly informed himſelf of? Why he took upon him to promiſe his readers every *internal and ex-*

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ternal argument, relating to the controverſy, at a time when, by his own confeſſion, he had not read half the Poems? Why, in all the time between the writing of his ſection, and the publication of his book, he never took the trouble to go to Briſtol, and examine the matter on the ſpot? Why, ſince he has read the Poems, he has not corrected thoſe errors, which he owns he has committed?— Theſe interrogations are ſurely natural, and the Profeſſor probably might find ſome difficulty in anſwering them. For however great any man's critical abilities and antiquarian knowledge may be, ſome little acquaintance with the ſubject he treats of, muſt at leaſt make his deciſion more ſatisfactory. However, even now, ſince he has ſeen all the Poems, his opinion, we find, is ſtill the ſame; they have even afforded him ſome *new proofs*. The firſt of which ſeems to be nothing more than that Rowlie is not like any of our ancient *bards*. He has told us before, that the Poems are like modern ones, which is pretty much the ſame

thing. But neither the excellence of any compoſition, any more than the *meanneſs* of it, nor indeed the diſſimilitude between that and other cotemporary writings, are by any means an abſolute proof that it muſt be a forgery. His next argument is, that the Poems in queſtion *appear to have been compoſed after ideas of diſcrimination took place.* What ſort of Poems they muſt be, which were compoſed before ſuch a period, for my part, I own I am ſomewhat at a loſs to conceive; as ſuch ideas ſeem always to be of ſome little uſe, if not abſolutely and indiſpenſably neceſſary, in making any poems, whether ancient or modern, intelligible.

But *in the Battle of Haſtings there are ſome great anachroniſms, and practices mentioned which did not ſubſiſt till afterwards.* The Profeſſor has not, however, pointed out any particular ones; and if there were any, they have eſcaped my obſervation, and I am apt to believe, will do the ſame to moſt readers. His next proof, and which perhaps, if true, would be quite

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deciſive, is as follows: *Turgot, from whoſe Saxon* chronicle (no longer a Latin one) *this Poem is ſaid to be tranſlated, died in* 1015, and therefore could not have written any account of the Battle of Haſtings, which did not happen till 1066, viz. fifty-one years after his death. This I own appeared, at firſt ſight, to have great weight, as I did not conceive it poſſible that any one could be ſo very ignorant of the author whom he had actually tranſlated; or that one of the Profeſſor's character ſhould have miſrepreſented, in ſo very extraordinary a manner, ſo material a date as this, eſpecially as he had founded one of his principal arguments upon it. Upon looking into Bale, Nicholſon, and ſome others, it appears, that this latter (viz. that the Profeſſor has miſrepreſented the caſe) is the fact, and that Turgot did not die till 1115, as the Profeſſor had rightly obſerved at firſt in his note upon J. Lydgate's Anſwer, &c. but finding it would ſtand in the way of this argument, corrected it afterwards in his *additions and emendations*;

emendations; and has here produced his own error, or whatever elſe the reader ſhall think proper to call it, as a proof that the Poem is a forgery. If this be one of thoſe anachroniſms the Profeſſor has hinted at before, and they are all no better founded than this, he has certainly ſhewn great judgment in keeping them to himſelf. But *allowing that Turgot might have lived in the time of the Conqueror, yet it is very extraordinary that a cotemporary writer ſhould mention nothing but what we knew before, and that the incidents are ſuch as are common in all battles.* What peculiarities would have ſatisfied the Profeſſor, is not eaſy to conceive. There are ſurely diſtinguiſhing circumſtances enough in this Poem, to give it every mark of being genuine, that could reaſonably have been expected by any one. It agrees with other hiſtories in ſuch a manner, as to prove its authenticity that way; and where it diſagrees, it is in ſuch a manner as rather to prove it an original that way. Some incidents muſt be the ſame in all battles: in this however,

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there ſeem to be many very diſtinguiſhing ones. But it is the hard fate of Rowlie to have his Poems found fault with every way. If a circumſtance not mentioned in other writers, occurs, ſuch as Stonehenge's being a Druidical temple, that is urged againſt him as a proof of forgery; if he agrees with other writers, his Poem is condemned upon that account: as if, in the firſt caſe, thoſe who lived ſome centuries nearer the times of the Druids, might not have been better informed than thoſe who lived ſo many centuries after; in the latter, as if it was impoſſible that two writers ſhould agree in the ſame ſtory.

Having thus ſhewn this piece to be ſpurious, he proceeds from this very *piece to demonſtrate the ſpuriouſneſs of the reſt. Chatterton allowed the firſt part to be a forgery of his own: the ſecond part, from what has been ſaid, cannot be genuine; and he who could write the ſecond part, could write every line in the whole collection.* This train of conſequences is, I own, more than I can comprehend: the con-

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cluſion he means to draw from it, is, probably, that Chatterton *did write every line in the whole collection.* How this is made out, the reader may poſſibly ſee; I do not, and can therefore do no more than object to the parts ſeparately. And firſt of Chatterton's declaration; how far we can rely upon this is much to be doubted. The Profeſſor, however, as it ſerves his turn, has choſen to give credit to him. But ſure any one elſe has at leaſt as much right to believe him, when he affirmed the ſecond part to be Rowlie's, as the Profeſſor has, when he affirmed the firſt part to be his own. Nor is the ſecond part proved a forgery, from any thing that has been ſaid by the Profeſſor; except Chatterton's declaring the firſt was his own, proves the ſecond was ſo too. If this be what the Profeſſor would have us believe, his concluſion can hardly be allowed. If he would inſinuate, that his own arguments have proved it a forgery, that, I think, is ſtill leſs likely to be admitted of.

After this, the Profeſſor, in another

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moſt gracious mood of conceſſion—whether from ſome miſgivings of the force of his arguments, or from confidence in the ſtrength of them, or for any other reaſon known only to himſelf, I ſhall not preſume to ſay—with his uſual candour, grants that it is poſſible Chatterton may not be the author; but if it was ſo, he ſays, *it is no proof that the Poems are not forged. But this is a new and another queſtion.* I cannot help obſerving, however, how extremely improbable it is, that any man who could write ſuch Poems as theſe, ſhould be againſt owning them, when neither life, nor ſafety, nor intereſt of any kind, was in the caſe; but that he ſhould uſher his impoſture into the world by means of a boy, who had juſt left a charity-ſchool, and whoſe veracity, from his known character, every one would be inclined to ſuſpect, is every thing but impoſſible. It is alſo equally incredible, that a boy of little more than fifteen, whoſe avowed works have not ſuch marks of genius in them as the Profeſſor would make us believe—who had never learnt

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any thing except reading, writing, and accounts—whoſe time, from the day he left ſchool, was moſtly taken up in writing for an attorney—whoſe leiſure hours were waſted in debauchery—who died, wanting upwards of three months of eighteen—ſhould have either time or abilities to contrive and execute ſuch a forgery. I hope thoſe few pieces in the Magazines, which the Profeſſor has been ſo kind as to point out, and whoſe peculiar merit might otherwiſe have eſcaped the generality of readers, are not inſtances of that aſtoniſhing *prematurity of abilities, comprehenſion of mind, and vigour of underſtanding, which predominated over his ſituations in life, and opportunities of inſtruction*; many of them are very bald, and, in my opinion, at moſt, very unſucceſsful imitations of Oſſian, without any great marks of genius or ſpirit. That he wiſhed to put off ſome of his own poems for Rowlie's is certain; I myſelf have ſeen ſome written with ſuch a deſign, but ſo unlike Rowlie, that, to unbiaſſed readers, it muſt appear impoſſible, that

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the ſame perſon ſhould have written thoſe and the collection printed in Rowlie's name. They are the worſt even of Chatterton's own compoſitions; and ſhew, that however antiquarian imagery had poſſeſſed his imagination, it communicated no ſhare of excellence to his compoſition.

This, to the beſt of my judgment, is the ſum of every thing at all material, that the Profeſſor has advanced by way of argument. In any of which, I ſhould be ſorry to have omitted or miſrepreſented the minuteſt circumſtance. The latter I have endeavoured to guard againſt on all occaſions, as ſtrictly as I poſſibly could, by uſing, as much as poſſible, his own words. And if I do not flatter myſelf too much, I have, I hope, made it appear to every unprejudiced reader, that his narrative is by no means exact, nor his quotations faithful: that his external arguments are far from being ſatisfactory; his internal neither fair nor concluſive: that Chatterton was not equal to the compoſition of ſuch Poems, either by his natural or his acquired

abilities; in a word, that the Profeſſor's ſyſtem throughout, is not ſupported by a ſingle argument that holds good, or a ſingle fact that may not be queſtioned.

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